

I also want to thank those of you who have already mentioned in public and in private the tragedy our Nation has endured this week with the loss of our Commerce Secretary and my dear friend, Ron Brown, and many other people, many of them quite young, who served our Nation in the Commerce Department and the United States military, and the business executives who were on that trip.

They lost their lives pursuing the very spirit that we are here to celebrate today. They went to the Balkans, a region that has literally been torn apart by war, where hundreds of thousands of people have been stripped of their dignity and lives, and where millions have been turned into refugees and where countless children have been robbed of their future. And they did it just to prove that through faith and commitment, the people of Bosnia could get over their hatred and intolerance and that America wanted to help.

Ron Brown laughed with me last Monday night when we talked about this mission in detail, that I had sent him all over the world with business leaders, primarily to expand the reach of the American economy, to generate more jobs for Americans. But he was going to Bosnia to use the power of the American economy, with the business leaders who were there, just to try to help the peace take hold, to give normal life back to those people. That is a noble and good thing for which they lived and died, and I ask you for your prayers for them and their families who, in these difficult days, are having their problems understanding the whys of all of this.

So as we remember those who perished here almost a year ago and we mourn those who died on that hard mountain so many thousands

of miles from here, let us again thank God for the grace that has brought us to this point and enabled us to live with our sorrows and tragedies and to rebuild our lives.

You know, the bagpipers over there were playing "Amazing Grace." I suppose it's the best known American hymn, at least the first verse. But as we remember those people in this community who are still grieving and still struggling, and we think of all of the difficulties life presents for which we have no answer, I would like to close with a reference to the third verse of that magnificent hymn:

Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come.

'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

We pray God's grace today on those who lost so much a year ago and on the efforts of those of you who are working hard to build a better future, to make something profoundly good come out of that tragedy.

I'd like now to ask the children who are here, and all of the others in the podium who would like to, to come up here and help me unveil the plaque. I don't have great manual skills. I need all of the help I can get up here. Could you all come up—the families and Governor, Mayor—you all come on over. Let's do this together.

God bless you. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:36 p.m. at the New YMCA Day Care Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Frank Keating and Lt. Gov. Mary Fallin of Oklahoma and Mayor Ron Norick of Oklahoma City.

Remarks to the Families of the Victims of the 1995 Bombing in Oklahoma City

April 5, 1996

Thank you very much. Thank you so much, Reverend Alexander. Governor Keating, Mrs. Keating, Mr. Mayor, Senator Nickles, Lieutenant Governor Fallin, Congressman Brewster, Congressman Istook; most of all to the families here

of those who lost their lives and those who survived the bombing almost a year ago.

I come here today as much as anything else to thank you. On this very difficult and painful day for me, when I have lost a great and good friend and a lot of gifted employees of the Fed-

eral Government, some of them very young, and some wonderful members of our Armed Forces and some of our Nation's most able business leaders, the power of your example is very much with me, and I thank you for that.

A year ago we were here to join in mourning your loss and praying for your healing. Today I ask that we not only remember your loss but celebrate the rebuilding you have already done and the work you will still do.

I have relived the moments of last year many times in my mind since I was here with you. I have wondered how you were doing and prayed for your strength. I was honored to have two of your citizens at the State of the Union Address and to recognize their unique contributions to our country through their service to you.

Just a few moments ago I was honored to lay a wreath, along with the First Lady and some children who survived and their parents, and then to dedicate the child care center that will be built near the site of the bombing, thanks to the remarkable efforts of your public officials and private citizens together. You have shown how strong you are, and you have given us all an example of the power of faith and community, the power of both God's grace and human courage.

On this Good Friday, what you have done has demonstrated to a watching and often weary and cynical world that good can overcome evil, that love can outlast hate, that the light of human life can shine on through the most terrible darkness. And so I thank you for that. And I know that you could not have done it without your faith.

On this Friday I can't help noting that there is a wonderful verse in the Book of Matthew which says that a person who follows the word of God will be likened unto a wise man who built his house on a rock. "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon the house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock." Well, your building was blown down, and many lives were shattered. But today I saw again that the spirit of Oklahoma City fell not, for it is founded upon a rock. And I thank you for showing that to America.

From the early rescue efforts that so many engaged in to the scholarship funds for the children who lost their parents, to the current outpouring of support that will enable families to

travel to Denver for the trial, to the dedication ceremony I just attended, I see over and over and over again that you have redeemed the promise of essential human nature and human possibility that we celebrate so profoundly in this season. And what I want you to know is that, in doing that, you have renewed the faith of America. You have drawn our national family closer together.

A year ago I was able to come here and say to you that "You have lost too much, but you have not lost everything. You have not lost America." In the year since, America has stood with you and prayed with you and worked with you as you rebuild. But today I come to you to say you have given America something precious, a greater sense of our shared humanity, our common values, our obligations to one another. You've taken some of the meanness out of our national life and put a little more love and respect into it, in ways that you probably cannot even imagine. And I thank you for that.

I will call on all Americans to express their solidarity with you when you celebrate the first anniversary of your tragedy. Earlier today I signed a proclamation calling for a moment of silence across our land on April the 19th at 9:02 a.m., Central Daylight Time, to ask the American people to gather in silent prayer and quiet reflection with their friends and neighbors, wherever they live, from Maine to Alaska, to southern California, to Florida.

And let me say to all of you again, we will be there with you. But because of what you have felt and what you have endured, let me ask you now if you will bow your heads in silent prayer to remember all that this year has meant to you and to pray for those who lost their loved ones on that plane in Bosnia. Only you can know how they feel.

May we pray.

[At this point, a moment of silence was observed.]

Amen.

I would like to say a special word now to some of the people who were involved here a year ago: To the Federal workers who survived the blast and are back on the job, we're glad, and we support you. To those who are not yet back on the job, we will stand with you until the day you are able to work again. To those who lost their lives in the service of their country, trying to help America get through every

day in the best possible way, we thank you, your families, beyond measure.

Before Hillary and I left the White House this morning, we planted a new dogwood tree on the South Lawn to honor the memory of those who died in the crash in Bosnia. It is very near the one we planted a year ago, before we came to be with you for the first time, in honor of the loved ones that you lost. A year ago I noted that the dogwood tree embodies the lesson of the Psalms that the life of a good person is like a tree whose leaf does not wither; that just as a tree takes a long time to grow, sometimes wounds take a long time to heal. Well, your tree has taken root on the South Lawn of the White House. In a few weeks it will flower. The healing power of our faith has also taken root and must bloom again here.

You know, this Easter Sunday all over the world the over 1.5 billion people who are Christians will be able to bear witness to our faith that the miracles of Jesus and the miracles of the human spirit in Oklahoma City only reflect the larger miracle of human nature that there is something eternal within each of us, that we all have to die, and that no bomb can blow away, even from the littlest child, that eternity which is within each of us.

I know a lot of you are still hurting, but I hope as Sunday comes you'll be able to find some comfort in that. Your healing has to go

on. A lot of you probably still have your doubts about all of this. I'm sure there's some lingering anger and even some rage and dark and lonely nights for many of the family members. I can only say to you that the older I get the more I know that we have to try harder to make the most of each day and accept the fact that things will happen we can never understand or justify.

We flew over my home State, you know, coming here, and it made me think of the words of an old gospel song that were actually written in Arkansas. And I thought I would leave you with these words, and our love and respect, as we move toward Easter.

The hymn goes:

Further along we'll know all about it.
Further along we'll understand why.
Rise up, my brothers, and walk in the sunshine.
Further along we'll understand why.

God bless you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:20 p.m. in the Myriad Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Don Alexander, pastor, First Christian Church; and Cathy Keating, wife of Gov. Frank Keating of Oklahoma. The proclamation is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond, Oklahoma April 5, 1996

Thank you very much. Governor Nigh, Mrs. Nigh, Congressman Istook, Mr. Mayor, Mr. Speaker, the other distinguished guests on the platform, and to the students and the other members of the University of Central Oklahoma community and family, Governor David Walters and Mrs. Walters, and to all the people who are here with me today because of the mission we are on.

Let me say it's good to be back here. I heard the students laughing when Governor Nigh announced that I was here 8 years ago, and I was thinking, most of the students were in grade school the last time I was here. [Laughter] Later

this year I'll be eligible for my AARP card—[laughter]—but I'm still glad to be here.

As all of you know, and as the Governor said, I came here today to Oklahoma to pay my respects nearly a year after the tragedy of the bombing, to attend a memorial service for the families of those who were victims, for the survivors and their families, and others who were Federal employees who worked there, and to help your State officials to dedicate the beginning of the child care center which will be rebuilt, which is a remarkable accomplishment, and to meet with this scholarship committee, which informed me of the results which were just announced to you by Governor Nigh.